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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000070

SIPDIS

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AF/S FOR S. HILL,  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: MDC'S TSVANGIRAI BRIEFS DIPLOMATS ON MDC  
RECONCILIATION, ELECTIONS, SADC TALKS, AND JANUARY 23 MARCH

REF: HARARE 67

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) At a diplomatic briefing on January 24 attended by the Ambassador, MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai said that March elections were logistically impossible, and had already been sufficiently rigged to assure a ZANU-PF victory. Tsvangirai said the two MDC factions had agreed in principle

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to form an electoral coalition; this, along with a decision as to whether or not to contest the elections, would be announced next week. Tsvangirai also discussed his arrest yesterday and the aborted march. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) At a diplomatic briefing on January 24 attended by the Ambassador, MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai confirmed (Reftel) that the two MDC factions had agreed in principle to work as an electoral coalition. Details were being worked out and he expected a public announcement at the end of next week. Tsvangirai also said a decision on whether or not to boycott the upcoming elections would be reached at about the same time.

¶3. (SBU) On the issue of elections, Tsvangirai averred that Zimbabwe did not have the administrative capacity to hold elections by the end of March. Further, it would be extremely difficult for ZANU-PF and the MDC to select and field candidates in over 200 parliamentary constituencies and for over 2000 local offices. The delimitation report had just been finalized; the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission did not yet have a copy. Tsvangirai concluded it would be "absurd" to kick start an election two weeks from now when a date was expected to be set.

14. (SBU) Regardless of whether the MDC participated in the elections, Tsvangirai told diplomats that the election had already been rigged and the outcome predetermined. As an example, he pointed out that there are over one million potential new voters who have turned 18 in the last several years who authorities were not permitting to register. Without a postponement of elections to allow a new constitution and reforms to take hold, a free and fair election was impossible.

15. (SBU) Tsvangirai said the SADC process was virtually over. At the outset, South African president Mbeki and SADC had assured the MDC that the process would lead to acceptable elections. The MDC had made concessions, including on Amendment 18, in a spirit of compromise. But Zimbabwean president Mugabe was intransigent, and SADC had no capacity to take a position against Mugabe if he remained so.

16. (SBU) Tsvangirai said the MDC would continue to demonstrate and march in an effort to mobilize its supporters, but it was struggling without resources. He urged the international community to determine how it could support the democratic movement in Zimbabwe.

17. (SBU) Finally, Tsvangirai confirmed the details of his arrest and the march as reported reftel. Yesterday morning, at about 4:00 a.m., he was asked to drive himself to a police station. He was detained for four hours and asked for assurances that the planned march would be peaceful. He was not mistreated.

18. (SBU) The MDC had followed the appropriate legal process by notifying police of the march and had received permission for it to take place. When permission was rescinded, the MDC

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had appealed to a magistrate. The magistrate had ordered that MDC supporters be allowed to move from MDC headquarters to the rally site. When they did so, police used tear gas and beat several individuals. Two or three people were temporarily hospitalized and several were arrested and released.

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